

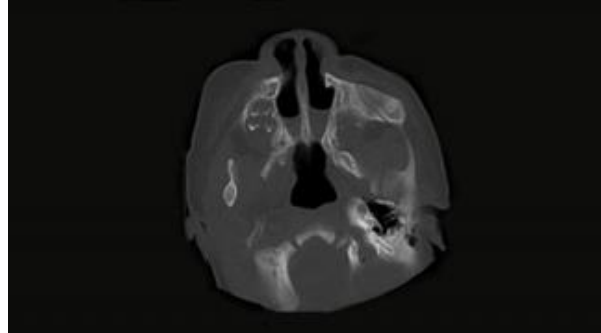
# Choanal Atresia

## What is it?

**Choanal atresia** is a rare congenital disorder. It occurs when the back of the nasal cavity narrows during fetal development. Breathing issues after birth or later in childhood can occur. There is a tissue that separates the mouth and nose area when the unborn baby is developing. Choanal atresia is thought to happen when this tissue is still there after birth. Nasal blockages may consist of bone and/or tissue. There are two forms of choanal atresia. **Unilateral choanal atresia** is the most common form and causes one nasal passage to be blocked. **Bilateral choanal atresia** is more severe because both nasal passages are blocked. This is serious and requires surgery. Intubation (insertion of a tube into the airway) is usually needed to help the infant breathe. There are many symptoms of choanal atresia, including noisy breathing, drainage from the nose, trouble with feedings, respiratory distress, and failure to pass a catheter into the **nasopharynx**. The nasopharynx connects the nasal cavity to the throat. Choanal atresia can be linked to other developmental disorders, including CHARGE syndrome, Treacher Collins syndrome, and Tessier syndrome.



Choanal Atresia Seen During Exam



CT Scan of Bilateral Choanal Atresia

Images are courtesy of the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

## How common is it?

About 1 out of every 7,000 babies are born with choanal atresia each year. It occurs more often in girls than boys.

## What causes it?

The actual cause of choanal atresia is unknown. However, during fetal development, tissue separates the mouth and nose area. Therefore, choanal atresia is thought to occur when this tissue is still there after birth.

## How is it diagnosed?

Infants with bilateral choanal atresia usually have trouble breathing right after birth. Imaging and the inability to pass a catheter into the nasopharynx can provide a diagnosis. Infants born with unilateral choanal atresia may not have symptoms until later in childhood. Symptoms may include nasal drainage and mouth breathing.

## How is it treated?

Infants born with bilateral choanal atresia require surgery soon after birth to open the nasal airway. Trans-nasal endoscopic and trans-palatal methods are types of surgeries performed. Infants born with unilateral choanal atresia may be given oxygen and monitored for symptoms. In mild cases, surgery may not be considered until later in childhood. Affected infants often undergo swallow tests to rule out possible feeding issues associated with choanal atresia.

### For more information:

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

<https://www.chop.edu/conditions-diseases/choanal-atresia>

